

Washington D.C. - Today, House Judiciary Committee Chairman John Conyers, Jr. (D-MI) and Judiciary Committee Member Rep. Daniel Lungren (R-CA) introduced the "National Emancipation Commemoration Act of 2009."

This legislation would create an 18-member Commission to provide for the commemoration of the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversaries of the Emancipation Proclamation, the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution, and related events. The Commission would also conduct a study on the persistence of modern slavery in the United States.

"The Thirteenth Amendment is a living promise of freedom that places a duty on us all to prevent slavery in all its forms," Conyers said. "This commission will help us commemorate the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation, while also underscoring that the promise of freedom still eludes millions worldwide. With more than 27 million people still living in bondage worldwide and an estimated 50,000 people enslaved here in the United States, the work of emancipation is far from complete."

"I am pleased to join my colleague Chairman Conyers in introducing legislation to commemorate the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation," said Lungren.

"As Abraham Lincoln said in his reply to Stephen Douglas regarding the spread of slavery, 'I hate it because of the monstrous injustice of slavery itself. I hate it because it deprives our republican example of just influence in the world...' Chattel slavery - whether through the arbitrary denial of personhood on the basis of skin color, or the exploitation of children through sex trafficking - contradicts the very principles upon which our nation was founded. To the extent that we continue to allow the deprivation of fundamental constitutional and human rights on the basis of arbitrary characteristics, we compromise our ability to defend the cause of liberty across the globe. This bill will enable us to explore why chattel slavery - in its various incarnations - remains a blight on humankind."

The National Emancipation Commemoration Commission will advise the Attorney General on making grants available to government and non-profit entities for activities and programs related to the commemoration. These activities may include the publication of scholarly research, production of a commemorative stamp or coin, and the development of informational displays and programs at National Parks and historic sites related to slavery, the Underground Railroad,

and the Emancipation throughout the United States.

The Commission will also conduct a study addressing why slavery in all its forms still exists, analyzing the persistence of modern slavery in the United States from 1865 to the present, and make recommendations to address issues and concerns highlighted by the study.

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Congressman Dan Lungren serves as Ranking Member on the House Administration Committee in addition to serving on the Judiciary and Homeland Security Committees